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PhD revisited: English in compulsory school

*Aims and content*¹

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ABSTRACT This chapter reports the doctoral study *Engelsk i grunnskolen: Mål og innhold* (Simensen, 1988a), which includes three investigations central to the field of English didactics. The overall aim of the study was to produce knowledge about the aims and content of the English school subject in compulsory school. One central focus was to investigate to what extent there was agreement over time between ideas in selected academic disciplines, “parent disciplines”, and ideas in the school subject, as reflected in curricula, assessment documents and adapted readers as teaching materials.

KEYWORDS curricula | ‘parent disciplines’ | aims of teaching | adaptation of text | assessment

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1. The doctoral study, *Engelsk i grunnskolen: Mål og innhold*, was conducted according to the regulations in force at the time at the College of Arts and Science, the University of Trondheim [presently the Norwegian University of Science and Technology, NTNU]. The study was defended in 1988, and consists of three studies (Simensen 1987a, 1988 b, c) All are available through The University of Oslo Library, UiO: Universitetsbiblioteket. (<http://www.ub.uio.no/>).

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INTRODUCTION

The doctoral study was completed in the late 1980s, at the start of the development of English didactics as an autonomous academic discipline. It was and still is a contribution to the history of the teaching of English as a foreign language in Norway. The work was motivated by a period of great change in the compulsory teaching of English. An important political aim was that courses in English should be offered to more pupils in rural areas, to younger pupils, and to pupils who previously had not been regarded as having a talent for learning a foreign language (e.g. Gundem, 1986a). Compulsory education in general was increased from seven to nine years from 1960 onwards. The reform was implemented in stages in different parts of the country. It culminated with English as a compulsory subject for all pupils nationwide in *Lov av 13. juni om grunnskolen* of 1969.² This represented an enormous challenge in terms of getting a new school system into operation, ensuring enough linguistically skilled teachers of English, providing suitable teaching materials, and establishing appropriate assessment systems.

Among the most significant changes to the English subject of a discipline-oriented nature were the definitions of new aims for teaching and the development of new methods and techniques for practical teaching and assessment of learning. These changes were partly due to new needs among learners and in society, and partly to new ideas and theories about language, language learning and assessment in relevant academic disciplines, such as linguistics, educational and applied linguistics and psychology, referred to as “parent disciplines” in my doctoral study.

The main aim of my doctoral study was to produce knowledge about the aims and content of the English school subject in compulsory school. On the one hand this entailed investigations of the *intentions* behind the school subject as communicated through policy documents, and on the other it involved studies of the *applications* of such intentions, specifically related to assessment (using exams and exam routines) and adapted readers for differentiation purposes (using publisher guidelines). The doctoral study dealt with these issues in three separate studies. The regulations at the time were different from those of the article-based theses of today, and so the three studies in my PhD thesis are to some extent independent of each other. They will therefore be presented separately in most of the sections below.

The first of the three studies, *Hvor kommer ideene fra? Skolefaget engelsk fra Normalplan (1939) til Mønsterplan (1987)* [hereafter *Where do the ideas come*

2. All titles of policy documents are given in the Norwegian original throughout the chapter. They are listed with translations in English following the reference list at the end of the chapter.

from?]) analysed and described the development of aims and content in the English school subject over a period of 50 years, and investigated how shifts in parent disciplines influenced changes in the school subject in compulsory education. The second of the studies, *Adapted readers and Publishers' Policy* [hereafter *Adapted readers*] had as its point of departure the problem of differentiating the teaching of English according to levels of language competence. Among the prescriptions in the curriculum at the time was to use various types of graded readers in practical teaching.³ The third of the studies, *Et kvart århundre med evaluering i skolefaget engelsk* [hereafter: *Assessment*] was an investigation of the system of assessment started during the period of great challenges, as noted above. The primary research question was to compare the system of assessment as *intended* to the system as *applied*.

THEORY

Stern (1983) specified the concept “theory” in relation to the comprehensiveness of it, distinguishing between three major types: T1, T2 and T3. T1 was described as the most comprehensive, “containing all reflection and all talk about education” including “all discussion about the curriculum and content of education, of good and bad teaching, teaching methods, [...] and psychological, sociological, and philosophical questions that underlie these” (Stern, 1983, p. 26). Stern’s own book from 1983 was a theory of the most comprehensive type, a T1, but it subsumed less comprehensive T2s, i.e. “different theories of language teaching and learning, based on different linguistic and psychological assumptions, often emphasising different objectives, and relying on different procedures”. According to Stern, “most books on language pedagogy can be regarded as theories of second language teaching in this second sense. They normally direct the readers to certain ways of teaching and often try to explain to them on what grounds a particular approach has been recommended” (Stern, 1983, pp. 26, 33). In Stern’s system, T3 was described as a concept in a more rigorous sense, as a theory having been verified experimentally or by observation, for example the electromagnetic theory of light or the behaviourist theory of language learning. A scientific theory of learning will deal with the effects on the learners of various amounts and types of exposure, but it will not, for example, be expected to deal with such practical issues that determine how timetables are made up. This is the purpose of a theory in the

3. The term “prescription” (or “prescribe”) is sometimes used below. It is not always used in a categorical sense in my sources, i.e. as something that “must be done”. It may be used as “could be done”, “can be done” or “should be done.”

broadest sense, a T1. Since my interests as a researcher concentrated on problems close to practice in English teaching, Stern's (1983) meta-view of "theory" was a useful model to help me see at what level of comprehensiveness my doctoral study naturally belonged and communicate this to future readers.

WHERE DO THE IDEAS COME FROM?

Kelly (1969) and Stern (1983) argued that ideas and perspectives in language teaching are developed in academic disciplines such as linguistics and psychology. Kelly (1969) showed how perspectives in language teaching have changed during 25 centuries. Furthermore, according to his theory,

The total corpus of ideas accessible to language teachers has not changed *basically* for 2,000 years. What have been in constant change are *the ways of building methods from them*, and the part of the corpus that is *accepted* varies from generation to generation, as does the form in which the ideas present themselves' (Kelly, 1969, p. 363; my emphasis).

In addition, he argued that language teaching is principally an art that, through the ages, has pursued three major aims: "the social, the artistic (or literary), and the philosophical" and that "at each period in history one of these has become predominant, generating its own approach to teaching" (Kelly, 1969, pp. 396–397). Kelly's point of view was intriguing and aroused considerable attention, although modified somewhat by his use of the word "basically" in the first quote. I included Kelly's opinion in the study to encourage a sober attitude among students of English didactics to changes in teaching methods.

In his T1, Stern (1983) focused on major concepts in language teaching over time such as "Concepts of language" and "Concepts of Society". In the former, the concepts were related to linguistics such as trends in linguistic theory; in the latter, the concepts were related, for example, to aspects of sociolinguistics.

Howatt (1984), revised as Howatt & Widdowson, 2004, presented the teaching and learning of English as a foreign or second language from the early years on. These two books primarily have a European perspective. Although to be regarded as second-generation theory in relation to the relevant parent disciplines, the works produced by the Council of Europe in the 1970s and 1980s – for example, van Ek (1977) – were also of theoretical importance for the doctoral study. These documents show how theoretical principles can be applied for pedagogic purposes. This applies in particular to the pioneering work done by the Council of Europe on curriculum design and assessment.

ADAPTED READERS

Theoretical discussions about which terms to use in connection with different types of graded readers were central to the study in general of graded texts in the 1980s. Tommola (1980) presented a theory of different parameters of simplification. Davies (1984) was a discussion of what was to be understood by the label “authentic”, which had become a catchword in applied linguistics and English teacher education spheres, and which at this point in time was trickling down into circles closer to educational practice. The distinction between “use” and “usage” in Davies & Widdowson (1974) and Widdowson (1979) was crucial in differentiating between adaptations and simplifications of texts. “Use” referred to an adaptation of content based on an interpretation of the *communicative value* of a text. “Usage”, on the other hand, corresponded more with a traditional linguistic simplification of vocabulary and structure. Three types of graded readers on the market at the time were distinguished: *Authentic readers* were readers not written for pedagogic purposes and published in their original style. *Pedagogic readers* were readers with texts specially written for learners of English as a foreign (or second) language. *Adapted readers* were readers with texts that were adapted for learners of English as a foreign (or second) language on the basis of authentic texts.

ASSESSMENT

Stern’s (1983) use of T2 as a theory at a medium level of comprehensiveness was visualised in models with boxes for decisive factors. His model comprised a separate box for “learning outcomes” and included updated perspectives from the 1970s on testing learning outcomes, as reported in Spolsky (1978). The theoretical distinction between “discrete point testing” and “integrative testing” was crucial for the investigation of assessment in my PhD study (e.g. Oller, 1979). In the former, “discrete point testing”, language was divided into small elements for testing. The ideal was to test one aspect of the learners’ language competence at a time. Discrete point testing was also referred to as “psychometric-structuralist testing” in some of the literature, thus signalling its link to the parent discipline “structural linguistics”. The latter type, “integrative testing”, on the other hand, combined several language categories, such as vocabulary and grammar, and/or several skills in the same test. One example was the type “Writing an essay”. Among other things, this would test knowledge of grammar, vocabulary, orthography, coherence and cohesion in the same test. An integrative test was sometimes referred to as global, as a measurement of the practical command of language or of language in use. The American linguist, Robert Lado, was central in this work (e.g. Lado,

1961). Finally, according to authoritative language test theory at the time, to be rational a taxonomy of tests should ideally be based on technique, such as fill the blanks in a text with words omitted, not on any *assumption* about what language skill, such as reading or writing, or language component, such as vocabulary or grammar, each test would measure (Oller, 1979).

REVIEW

The two studies investigating applications of intentions in the English school subject, *Adapted readers* and *Assessment*, dealt with issues that were relatively general for English language teaching and could thus be related to international research literature. The first study, however, about the development of the English subject, had a national focus, and was thus related to previous research mainly from Norway.

WHERE DO THE IDEAS COME FROM?

Up to 1962, research studies on English in the compulsory school system were rare. Only small-scale local experiments were normally reported. This changed with the introduction of *Læreplan for forsøk med 9-årig skole of 1960* (L60). The research project which followed, “Skolefaget i skolereformen: Utviklingen av engelskfaget som del av skolereformen” is a most comprehensive study (Gundem 1986a; 1986b). It was reported in two wide-ranging volumes, and the conclusions were stated in terms of 10 tentative theses about the development of the school subject English in the relevant period. The theses were further developed and discussed in the paragraphs that followed. Among the theses were the following: The development of the school subject is part of the development of the school system in general; not only language and culture, but also other disciplines, are of influence; the impact of research is limited; and change comes gradually and depends more on teachers than on the curriculum.

ADAPTED READERS

Previous investigations or surveys of adapted readers mainly included the following works: Bamford (1984), Davies and Widdowson (1974) and Hedge (1985). On the basis of these works, two chief principles of adaptations were distinguished, summed up by the following key words: 1) Informational and situational features, organisation of information, explication of background concepts and suppositions. 2) Features of language including vocabulary, structures, sentence length, and how

sentences combine. The first principle belonged to the category “use” as expressed in the theory by Davies and Widdowson above. The second belonged to these researchers’ category “usage”. Two studies of the simplification of texts were also of relevance for my investigation. The first was Lautamatti (1978), which was an examination of cohesion and coherence in texts simplified by native speakers of English and meant for readers of English as a foreign language. The second was Simensen (1986), which was an experiment asking a group of Norwegian scholars in different non-language disciplines to simplify a Norwegian text that had proved to be particularly difficult to read for students of Norwegian as a second language. The resulting simplified texts were then analysed.

A question which seldom was referred to in studies of adapted, simplified or graded texts, was to what extent the reader’s knowledge in general or of specific topics was adequate for an understanding of the text at hand. Other studies, in contrast, dealt with the relationship between cognitive structures, text schemata or scripts and text comprehension (e.g. Carrell, 1983).

ASSESSMENT

Previous research of particular relevance were investigations of linguistic errors in learner language (Corder, 1981; and studies included in Svartvik, 1973). This applied both to the description of types of errors at different stages in learning, often referred to as features of *interlanguage* or *approximative systems*, and to studies of attitudes among people to learner language with errors. One assumption as a result of such studies was that learners should not worry so much about the errors they make because they may just be a step on the way towards the correct target language. According to the following title, some researchers even regarded errors as positive signals of learning: “...you can’t learn without goofing” (Dulay & Burt, 1974, p. 95). In one study, the following demanding question was asked in the title: “Should we count errors or measure success?” (Enkvist, 1973).

In studies of attitudes to erroneous spoken language, pronunciation errors were ranked as more disturbing or irritating than grammatical errors. In studies of written language, lexical errors were ranked as more negative for comprehension than grammatical errors (Albrechtsen, Henriksen & Færch, 1980; Johansson, 1978). Furthermore, studies in applied linguistics gave examples of conversations with long utterances that were correct according to the rules of grammar, but *not* according to the rules of this type of discourse, whereas short utterances without much repetition of previous utterances were defined as correct (Widdowson, 1978).

A descriptive survey in the 1980s of problems in language education had both Norwegian teachers and pupils as respondents. Among the findings were that English teachers thought oral skills were underrepresented in the examination systems and that the correspondence between the aims of the school subject and the examination system was poor (Evensen, 1986).

METHODOLOGY

Stern's (1983) T2 functioned as an overall research map for my doctoral study, recognising "the existence of different theories of language teaching and learning, based on different linguistic and psychological assumptions, often emphasising different objectives, and relying on different procedures (T2s)" (Stern, 1983, p. 26). Naturally, only selected areas on the map could be investigated in a PhD study.

WHERE DO THE IDEAS COME FROM?

This investigation spanned a period of 50 years in which four of the most noteworthy curricula were put into operation (i.e. N39, L60, M74, M87). The study included analyses of 1) texts about what language is and how languages are learnt, as described in the literature from the relevant disciplines in academia and 2) prescriptions in the curricula in operation about aims and content in the school subject.

For the first type of analysis, I grouped the data into partly overlapping periods. For the second, I distinguished between different types of aims and different types of content, such as language skills, language categories, teaching methods, procedures, etc. for the same periods. The final step of the study was to find out on which points the trends described in texts from parent disciplines accorded with those described in the curriculum for the teaching of English.

TABLE 1.1. Research design of the study *Where do the ideas come from?*

Qualitative data	Analysis
Data consisting of central concepts (such as communicative competence) over time in parent disciplines	Text analysis of scholarly documents
Data consisting of aims and content in the four most noteworthy curricula in operation in the period 1939–1987	Text analysis of curricula
	Contrasting the two text analyses

ADAPTED READERS

Existing books and articles about graded readers and the use of readers in teaching were used to obtain the necessary background information for the study (Bamford, 1984; Brumfit, 1979; Hedge, 1985; Nuttall, 1982). Publishers referred to in these works were contacted in 1981/82 or 1985 if readers of the adapted type were on their publishing lists. The publishers were qualified to be included in my study if they could provide written information about their policy of adaptation, referred to as “guideline documents” in my study. This applied to six publishers with a total number of nine series of adapted readers. These publishers were also asked how they selected texts for adaptation.

The guideline documents were analysed and compared. The comparison aimed at finding major differences between principles of adaptation, such as types of control. Finally, the principles were contrasted to foci of interest in parent disciplines, such as a focus of interest in linguistic structure or in discourse structure.

TABLE 1.2. Research design of the study *Adapted Readers*

Qualitative data	Analysis
Guideline documents for adapting texts	Text analysis <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ to distinguish between different bases of selection of texts for adaptation, types of control, levels of vocabulary and types of structures permitted ▶ to relate principles of adaptation to foci of interest in parent disciplines

ASSESSMENT

This study spanned a period of 25 years. The sources for the study were the sections about assessment in the curriculum in operation, the general guide for assessment at this level as well as assessment documents of a similar nature issued for each year. These gave information about the years when written and/or oral exams were arranged and the percentage of pupils selected for written and/or oral exams. In addition, the yearly documents included the written tests given each year as well as the assessment criteria for these.

Both qualitative and quantitative research methods were used in the study. The qualitative approaches described and compared the aims of teaching and the criteria for assessment, as well as the prescriptions of test types that could be used in the test batteries. The quantitative approaches compared the numbers of pupils tested in oral and/

or written exams in the period. Furthermore, all the tests used were registered in a classification scheme, and the numbers and types of tests given were compared over time.

TABLE 1.3. Research design of the study *Assessment*.

Qualitative data		Quantitative data	
Data	Analysis	Data	Analysis
<i>Normalplan for byfolkeskolen</i> (1939; N39) <i>Læreplan for forsøk med 9-årig skole</i> (1960; L60) <i>Mønsterplan for grunnskolen</i> (1974; M74) <i>Mønsterplan for grunnskolen.</i> (1987; M87) <i>Sentrale emner i norsk, matematikk, tysk, fransk fra Mønsterplan for grunnskolen.</i> (S-81) <i>Evaluering i 9-årig skole. Metodisk Veiledning</i> , 1964 <i>Evaluering i 9-årig skole. Avgangsprøva</i> (1964–1970) <i>Evaluering i grunnskolen. Avgangsprøva</i> (1971–1973) <i>Evaluering i grunnskolen. Avgangsprøva</i> (1974–1986) <i>Handbok for skolen</i> (1976), (1984)	Comparative text analyses of aims, test types, and assessment criteria	<i>Evaluering i 9-årig skole. Metodisk Veiledning</i> , (1964) <i>Evaluering i 9-årig skole. Avgangsprøva</i> (1964–1970) <i>Evaluering i grunnskolen. Avgangsprøva</i> (1971–1973) <i>Evaluering i grunnskolen. Avgangsprøva</i> (1974–1986)	Comparisons of <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ numbers of oral and written exams arranged, ▶ numbers of pupils tested each year, ▶ the standing of discrete point and integrative tests given over time.

FINDINGS

WHERE DO THE IDEAS COME FROM?

Normalplan for byfolkeskolen (N39) was a curriculum guideline for the teaching of English for only a small part of the school population. Among the major aims were good pronunciation and knowledge of grammar. The teaching of grammar was described as inductive. In addition, the rules of grammar should be learnt. The direct method was described as the approach to teaching.

L60 continued to keep good pronunciation and knowledge of rules of grammar among the aims listed. It argued, for example, for a systematic use of a textbook for grammar teaching (“*en skolegrammatikk*”). Otherwise, L60 adhered to the aural–oral approach to teaching. Thereafter, correct pronunciation and knowledge of rules of grammar lost their position among the aims of the school subject. The two curricula that followed, M74 and *Mønsterplan for grunnskolen* of 1987 (M87), gradually introduced new or slightly new aims of teaching.

The communicative aspect of English was mentioned for the first time in M74 and was further developed in M87. M74 clearly contained elements of the audio-lingual approach to teaching. Teachers were, for example, advised to direct controlled exercises in the classroom in such a way that linguistic errors could be avoided. The next curriculum document in line, M87, was exceptionally balanced when it came to underlying learning theory, i.e. in explicit terms it opened for two widely different concepts of language learning: a mechanistic one, including different procedures of formalised teaching, and a mentalistic one, trusting free acquisition and meaningful learning.

As to the comparison of ideas in the school subject and the relevant parent disciplines, there was correspondence on most points of significance. When it came to questions of language, for example, it applied to shifts of focus, in research as well as in teaching, from smaller to larger units in the language, and from linguistic competence as an aim for teaching to a more comprehensive concept of language as an aim, i.e. a communicative competence concept, including to some extent socio-linguistic and socio-cultural abilities.

ADAPTED READERS

The six publishers qualified to be included in the study all gave information about their norms for selecting books for adaptation. Among these was to pick books with the right themes for various age groups. It was, for example, suggested that with young readers it was important to be concerned with the things that happened, but with older readers, it was important to be concerned with the causes of action and the feelings of the protagonists. For several publishers it was important to give the readers a real book, not a disguised lesson or schoolbook, and to avoid talking down to them.

Three types of principles for a control of adapted readers were distinguished: a control of information, of language, and of discourse and text structure. Most of the publishers agreed on the principles of control of language. By far the greatest attention was in fact given to the control of language on a lexical and a grammat-

ical level. Thus, in Widdowson's terms, it was mostly an adaptation of "usage". Only two publishers differed noticeably by including principles of adaptation for a control of information and a control of discourse and text structure, an adaptation of "use", as noted above. As to control of information, this applied for example to avoid "loads" of information in adapted texts and instead to distribute information "in easily digestible amounts". As to control of discourse and text structure, this applied for example to avoid "too much time switching" in adapted texts and instead to organise a text in accordance with "the order of events". Thus, in this study, because of the general lack of principles of adaptation of "use" in most publishers' policy documents, I concluded that works of both a theoretical and an empirical kind in parent disciplines on the one hand, and text adaptation as a practical field on the other, represented two different worlds.

ASSESSMENT

According to existing information, written final exams were arranged 24 times, oral exams only 15. The statistics thus revealed a considerable lack of correspondence between intention and application in oral versus written assessment at final exams, as had been reported in the descriptive survey of 1986 mentioned above. The registration of written test types in my study showed that discrete point test types were in the majority in the first half of the period studied, while the integrative were in the majority in the second. The increase in integrative testing was exemplified by the test type "Write coherent text", with 11 instances in the period 1962–1975, but 47 in the period 1975–1986 for comparable numbers of examinees and during reasonably comparable time spans. In general, the shifts in interest in relevant parent disciplines – from a focus on smaller elements in the language to a focus on larger, meaningful units such as connected texts, stories, conversations, discourse, and texts in different genres – were thus reflected in the frequencies of different test types given in the period studied.

The general guide for assessment, *Evaluering i 9-årig skole* of 1964, underlined that positive, as well as negative aspects of the pupils' written texts should be noticed. Besides, assessors were advised to distinguish between essential and non-essential linguistic errors. A new step was taken in 1967 when assessors were instructed not to place too much emphasis on formal errors that did not distort ("*fordreier*") the meaning in the pupils' written texts. Thus, instructions for the assessment of written language were from now on in accordance with research in parent disciplines on attitudes to linguistic errors, as discussed above. This question was returned to and further developed in several directives during the years that followed.

The directive from 1965 was of a somewhat different kind. It recommended giving pupils credit if their writing gave an impression of a good *oral* command of the language, giving it the label “aural assessment” (“*auditiv vurdering*”). The yearly directive of 1970 recommended in addition that “short answers” to questions, typical of conversations, in certain written test types should be credited as correct. In 1978, this was reformulated as a prescription. This development of assessment criteria paralleled the shifts in parent disciplines towards a more comprehensive understanding of the functional and communicative purpose of language, as well as the priority of the oral language in linguistic research.

DISCUSSION: CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE ENGLISH DIDACTICS FIELD

EMPIRICAL CONTRIBUTIONS

The PhD study reported in this chapter was and is a contribution to the history of the teaching of English as a foreign language in Norway. Among other things, it intended to provide an academic basis for English didactics both as a study component and as an autonomous field of research at universities and other higher educational institutions. In addition, the three separate studies all provide empirical contributions related to their separate topics.

The study *Where do the ideas come from?* showed that ideas nurtured in relevant academic disciplines were of great importance for a practical field such as foreign language teaching. Over time, people have criticised many of the most fundamental shifts in foreign language teaching. However, my PhD study has shown that these shifts are not due to whims and fads of the writers of curricula etc. but “to the best of our knowledge” at any time in scholarly disciplines.

The study *Adapted readers* showed that this type of teaching materials in English was produced according to standards which were essentially agreed on in the publishing world. These standards largely represented a control of language and were essentially carried out at low levels in the language such as on the levels of vocabulary and structure, i.e. an adaptation of “usage”, as discussed above. An important question in my PhD study was therefore if not the *communicative value* of a text, as denoted by the concept of “use”, should not be taken into consideration to a larger extent in text adaptations for pupils at compulsory levels of teaching.

The study *Assessment* was inspired by the conviction expressed by practicing teachers of English that it was the exam system, not the curriculum, which determined the priorities of skills in teaching. Significant discrepancies between intention and application were in fact demonstrated in the study, for example in the sta-

tus of oral and written skills at final exams. Attitudes to linguistic errors in the educational community changed radically in the period of this particular study. These changing attitudes were at the time interpreted as advance notice of assessment of a more communicative nature in the years to come.

METHODOLOGICAL AND THEORETICAL CONTRIBUTIONS

The combination of qualitative and quantitative research approaches was appropriate for my doctoral study. The qualitative approach made possible a comparison between key concepts in parent disciplines and in various parts of English as a school subject. The qualitative approach was also appropriate for investigating to what extent there was correspondence between the aims of teaching as expressed in steering documents and the application of them in the assessment system. The quantitative approach, on the other hand, made possible a comparison of the frequencies of oral and written exams arranged, the numbers of pupils tested in oral and written disciplines, and the numbers of different written test types used across the years.

My doctoral study showed that an educational theory at a medium level of comprehensiveness, a modified T2-type in Stern's (1983) model, functioned well as a research map for the topics investigated.

IMPLICATIONS FOR TEACHING ENGLISH AS L2

Practicing teachers of English should know the history of their discipline. They should not only know how English teaching has changed over time, but *why* it has changed. This also applies to students in teacher education. They should, for example, know that what they learn in terms of teaching methods, techniques of teaching, etc. in their higher education studies might be different from what they themselves experienced as pupils in the school system, and they should also understand *why*. My PhD study was a contribution to such insights, showing how ideas in academic disciplines influence the development of aims and content in the English school subject and how the subject has changed from one curriculum guideline to the next. Insight into how and why English teaching has changed over the years is not something teachers need to pass on to their pupils, but it is a valuable addition to student teachers' development of teacher professionalism.

As to the practical problem of differentiation in mixed ability teaching, the use of texts for reading at different readability levels, sometimes combined with listening, may often be the only feasible alternative. Practicing teachers should study

a variety of up-to-date readers for this purpose, including, if convenient, in an electronic format. These readers should be adapted according to a current understanding in academic disciplines of what is a comprehensible text for whom and in what socio-cultural setting. The choice of adapted readers should be a responsibility of those who know the pupils best, i.e. their teachers of English.

As to the question of assessment, the lesson is unmistakable. In order to achieve the aims of the school subject, a must is that all possible aspects of the aims and content are assessed and, if possible, tested. There is truth in the saying: “What is tested, counts”. As many practicing teachers have experienced, this definitely applies to the opinions of the pupils.

RECENT DEVELOPMENTS

At the time of the doctoral study, there were considerable gaps in the knowledge of the school subject English in compulsory teaching. In addition to the three separate studies published as parts of the doctoral study, the issues dealt with here reappeared in several publications in the following years (see Simensen, 2008; 2011 on the relationship between parent disciplines and the school subject English, and Simensen 1987b; 1990 on adapted readers). In addition, the history of the English school subject in Norway, and the theories and research that have influenced the application of teaching methods and approaches, have been presented and discussed in various materials for teacher education (e.g. Simensen, 2007; 2018).

When I embarked on this doctoral study, it was at a time when the discipline “English didactics” in the wide sense of the term was introduced as an autonomous academic discipline in higher educational institutions, in teacher education programmes and related studies, first as a study component and later also as an autonomous field of research (see discussion of “*engelskmetodikk*” versus “*engelskdidaktikk*” in Simensen, 2018). The chapters in this book illustrate that the development and advancement of this academic discipline have indeed made a difference in closing gaps.

Among recent developments, it is also appropriate to refer to more informal observations that show that English in Norway has moved from functioning as a foreign language towards gradually functioning as a second language. This shift of status was, for example, pointed out in research approximately 20 years ago (Graddol 1997, p. 11).

FUTURE RESEARCH

Since my PhD study was completed thirty years ago, it is clearly necessary to update the knowledge of *all* aspects studied at that time. Among other things, practicing teachers and assessors at all levels will, for example, in the future in all likelihood need new criteria for assessing learner language in English that deviates in one way or other from standard norms, be it learner language influenced by sociolects of some kind, or by *new* varieties of English worldwide (see, e.g. Rindal, chapter 16). In order to ensure equal assessment practice nationwide, this will be one particularly important area for future research and development work.

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